

Securing the North Natuna Sea: Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy Strategy

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the Evolution of Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy Strategy in the North Natuna Sea, employing Historical Institutionalism to analyze the historical trajectory. The study also adopts a Neorealist Perspective to assess the Current State of Defense Cooperation and Alliances in the region, shedding light on geopolitical dynamics. A Legal Positivist Perspective evaluates Adherence to International Maritime Laws and Defense Diplomacy. Additionally, Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, and their influence on Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy in the North Natuna Sea are examined, emphasizing implications for Perception and Support. Qualitative research methods, including document analysis and expert interviews, guide the investigation. Findings reveal a nuanced historical development, realist power dynamics, legal frameworks, and the crucial role of cultural diplomacy. The research underscores the need for a comprehensive and adaptive defense diplomacy strategy to secure the North Natuna Sea.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mendalami Evolusi Strategi Diplomasi Pertahanan Indonesia di Laut Natuna Utara dengan menggunakan Institusionalisme Historis untuk menganalisis lintasan sejarah. Kajian ini juga menggunakan Perspektif Neorealis untuk menilai Keadaan Kerja Sama dan Aliansi Pertahanan Saat Ini di kawasan, dan menyoroti dinamika geopolitik. Perspektif Positivis Hukum mengevaluasi Kepatuhan terhadap Hukum Maritim Internasional dan Diplomasi Pertahanan. Selain itu, Diplomasi Budaya, Soft Power, dan pengaruhnya terhadap Diplomasi Pertahanan Indonesia di Laut Natuna Utara juga dikaji, dengan menekankan implikasi terhadap Persepsi dan Dukungan. Metode penelitian kualitatif, termasuk analisis dokumen dan wawancara ahli, memandu penyelidikan. Temuan-temuan tersebut mengungkap adanya perkembangan sejarah yang beragam, dinamika kekuasaan realis, kerangka hukum, dan peran penting diplomasi budaya. Penelitian ini menggarisbawahi perlunya strategi diplomasi pertahanan yang komprehensif dan adaptif untuk mengamankan Laut Natuna Utara.

Kata Kunci: diplomasi pertahanan, hukum maritim internasional, Laut Natuna Utara, soft power

1. Introduction

The North Natuna Sea is a critical maritime region in Southeast Asia, hosting the world's largest exclusive economic zone (EEZ) (Sudarsono et al., 2018). As the archipelagic nation hosting the North Natuna Sea, Indonesia is pivotal in shaping regional security dynamics (Lubis, 2022). To safeguard its interests and contribute to regional stability, Indonesia needs to formulate and implement a comprehensive defense diplomacy strategy (Darmawan, 2021).

To protect its sovereignty and national interests in the North Natuna Sea, Indonesia should prioritize strengthening partnerships with neighboring countries, particularly those with overlapping maritime claims in the region. This can be achieved through proactive and constructive dialogue to resolve disputes and promote cooperation. Additionally, Indonesia should enhance its military capabilities and readiness and establish robust mechanisms for information sharing and intelligence cooperation with regional partners to deter potential threats and foster trust and collaboration among countries in the area. Indonesia can also leverage its position as a non-claimant state in the

South China Sea disputes to act as a neutral mediator and advocate for peaceful resolutions. By doing so, Indonesia can assert its influence and contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the region (Darmawan, 2021; Inkiriwang, 2021; Lubis, 2022). Furthermore, Indonesia should increase its maritime presence in the North Natuna Sea, using coastguards and navy warships to patrol the area, and focus on sustainable development while utilizing its resources and protecting the environment (Darmawan, 2021; Sudarsono et al., 2018). To achieve these goals, Indonesia must optimize its defense diplomacy strategy, enhance cooperation between agencies, and formulate a comprehensive diplomacy strategy (Lubis, 2022; Sukadis, 2021).



Figure 1. Indonesia-China Overlapping Maritime Claim Map (Maulana, 2022)

The following points can highlight Indonesia's strategic significance in the North Natuna Sea:

Sovereignty: According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Indonesia has sovereignty over the waters of the territorial sea and the inland sea within the North Natuna Sea (Sukadis, 2021). However, recent tensions have arisen due to overlapping claims with China (Sukadis, 2021).

Economic Potential: The North Natuna Sea and the Natuna Islands are rich in natural resources, such as fisheries and mining potential (Darmawan, 2021). Indonesia needs to increase its presence in the area by utilizing its resources and building proper tourism infrastructure (Darmawan, 2021).

Diplomatic Engagement: Indonesia's defense diplomacy is crucial for fostering mutual and peaceful relations with other countries, including China and the United States (Inkiriwang, 2021). The country must recalibrate its defense diplomacy to pursue national and regional strategic interests (Inkiriwang, 2021).

Regional Stability: Indonesia affirms the role of ASEAN in regional stability, peace, and prosperity through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Outlook on the Indo-Pacific Region (AOIP) (MFA, 2023).

To maintain its strategic significance and contribute to regional stability, Indonesia should:

Strengthen Defense Diplomacy: Indonesia needs to optimize its defense diplomacy strategy to achieve national interests and maintain sovereignty (Sudarsono et al., 2018). This includes enhancing cooperation between agencies and formulating a comprehensive diplomacy strategy (Sudarsono et al., 2018).

Increase Maritime Presence: Indonesia should increase its maritime presence in the North Natuna Sea, using coastguards and navy warships to patrol the area

(Darmawan, 2021). However, budgetary issues may hinder sustaining a military presence in the region (Darmawan, 2021).

Promote Sustainable Development: Indonesia should focus on sustainable development in the North Natuna Sea, utilizing its resources while protecting the environment (Darmawan, 2021).

Enhance Diplomatic Engagement: Indonesia should engage in constructive dialogue with other countries, including China and the United States, to address maritime issues and maintain regional stability (Inkiriwang, 2021).

Indonesia's strategic significance in the North Natuna Sea is crucial for regional stability. To safeguard its interests and contribute to regional stability, Indonesia must formulate and implement a comprehensive defense diplomacy strategy to strengthen its maritime presence, promote sustainable development, and enhance diplomatic engagement.

State of Problems

The North Natuna Sea in Southeast Asia has become a focal point of geopolitical tensions and security challenges. Territorial disputes, resource competition, and strategic rivalries have created a complex environment, necessitating a thorough examination of Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in this critical maritime region. The state of problems revolves around understanding the multifaceted challenges faced by Indonesia and the imperative to develop a nuanced defense diplomacy approach that ensures national security and fosters regional stability.

The North Natuna Sea has historically witnessed disputes over maritime boundaries, with neighboring nations making conflicting territorial claims. The region's economic significance further complicates the situation involving fisheries, energy resources, and crucial maritime trade routes. To address these challenges, it is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of Indonesia's current defense diplomacy initiatives and identify areas that require strategic adjustments.

Research Objectives

The research aims to analyze Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea, assess the effectiveness of defense cooperation, explore the legal dimensions of Indonesia's defense diplomacy, and investigate cultural diplomacy and soft power initiatives. It also seeks to provide policy recommendations based on a thorough understanding of the region's security dynamics and identified challenges.

Research Questions

To accomplish the stated objectives, the research will address key research questions. These include:

How has Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea evolved historically, and what lessons can be learned from past engagements?

What is the current state of defense cooperation and alliances in the region, and how effective are these partnerships in addressing security challenges in the North Natuna Sea?

To what extent does Indonesia adhere to international maritime laws, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in shaping its defense diplomacy strategy?

How do cultural diplomacy and soft power contribute to Indonesia's defense diplomacy efforts in the North Natuna Sea, and what are the implications for public perception and international support?

By addressing these research questions, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into Indonesia's defense diplomacy complexities in the North Natuna Sea, ultimately charting a course for a more effective and adaptive strategy.

2. Methods

Creswell (2013) promoted qualitative research as a rich and nuanced approach to comprehending complex phenomena, making it an appropriate methodology for examining Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea. This essay delves into the application of qualitative research methods using secondary data, emphasizing the appropriateness of this approach for the study in question.

(Creswell, 2013) emphasizes the significance of understanding the context and setting in qualitative research, particularly pertinent in exploring Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy. Secondary data derived from existing literature, government reports, and academic analyses provide a wealth of historical and contemporary information crucial for charting the trajectory of defense diplomacy in the North Natuna Sea. This method allows researchers to build on existing knowledge, providing a solid foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

(Creswell, 2013) advocates literature review as an essential component of qualitative research, providing a theoretical framework and identifying gaps in existing knowledge. Secondary data, drawn from academic articles, policy documents, and international reports, serves as a foundation for the literature review in this study. It aids in synthesizing existing theories on

defense diplomacy, adapting them to the specific context of the North Natuna Sea, and identifying areas requiring further exploration.

The secondary data analysis involves identifying patterns, themes, and relationships (Creswell, 2013). This study employs thematic analysis to extract insights from historical records, government policies, and scholarly debates on Indonesia's defense diplomacy. Researchers can uncover recurring themes by systematically coding and categorizing information, contributing to a deeper understanding of defense dynamics in the North Natuna Sea.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Evolution of Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy Strategy in the North Natuna Sea: Lessons from Historical Institutionalism

The historical evolution of Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea reveals a complex interplay of factors that have shaped the nation's approach to security in this critical maritime region. Applying a historical institutionalism perspective, as Pierson (2004) suggested, offers a useful lens to reveal the intricate layers of Indonesia's prior engagements and draw lessons for the present and future.

By examining the historical development of Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea, it becomes evident that many factors have influenced the nation's approach to security in this vital maritime area. Applying a historical institutionalism perspective, as Pierson (2004) suggested, enables a deeper comprehension of the complex layers that have shaped Indonesia's previous engagements. Moreover, this perspective provides valuable insights that can be utilized to draw lessons for the present and future of Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea.

According to historical institutionalism (Pierson, 2004), historical legacies, institutional structures, and prior decisions, all impact the direction of a country's policies. Indonesia's defense diplomacy in the North Natuna Sea, marked by territorial disputes and geopolitical tensions, showcases the enduring impact of historical factors on contemporary strategies (Yee, 2011).

The historical factors influencing Indonesia's approach to the North Natuna Sea can be traced back to its colonial past, particularly under Dutch rule. The Dutch East Indies, a Dutch colony comprising most of what is now Indonesia, significantly impacted the country's history and territorial claims. The Dutch's gradual

political expansion over centuries and establishment as the region's dominant economic and political power have left a lasting imprint on Indonesia's defense diplomacy and territorial sovereignty (Adams, 1996; Indonesia Investment, n.d.). The institutional structures established during the post-independence era, such as the Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian Armed Forces, have also shaped the country's regional defense policies and strategies (Anton et al., 2021). The Dutch's territorial expansion and subsequent Indonesian independence have contributed to the complex geopolitical dynamics that Indonesia continues to navigate in the North Natuna Sea (Sukadis, 2021).

Territorial disputes and claims with neighbouring countries have shaped Indonesia's engagements in the North Natuna Sea throughout history. Historical legacies, such as colonial-era demarcations and subsequent geopolitical shifts, have left an indelible mark on the region's security dynamics (Anggraini et al., 2019). The historical institutionalism perspective allows us to discern the enduring influence of these legacies on Indonesia's defense diplomacy, emphasizing the importance of understanding the roots of territorial disputes for formulating effective strategies.

Domestic and international institutional structures have also played a pivotal role in shaping Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy. Establishing regional organizations, such as ASEAN, has introduced institutional frameworks that influence the nation's approach to security in the North Natuna Sea (Yee, 2011). Historical institutionalism allows us to trace the development of these institutions, understanding their impact on Indonesia's defense policies and their role in shaping regional security dynamics.

Past decisions made by Indonesian leaders in response to security challenges in the North Natuna Sea contribute to the institutionalization of defense strategies. Historical incidents, such as diplomatic negotiations and military posturing, have imprinted the nation's approach to safeguarding its regional interests (Pierson, 2004). Analyzing these past decisions through a historical institutionalism lens provides insights into the factors that have influenced the evolution of Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy.

The lessons derived from historical institutionalism shed light on the need for adaptive and context-specific approaches in formulating defense strategies. Understanding the persistent influence of historical legacies and institutional structures allows policymakers to craft strategies that are responsive to the complexities of the North Natuna Sea. Lessons from past engagements underscore the importance of

diplomatic finesse, regional cooperation, and the establishment of effective institutional mechanisms to address security challenges.

3.2. Current State of Defense Cooperation and Alliances in the North Natuna Sea: A Neorealist Perspective

Analyzing the state of defense cooperation and alliances in the North Natuna Sea necessitates exploring power dynamics and security considerations through (Waltz, 1993) neorealism lens. This theoretical framework allows for a nuanced analysis of the efficacy of partnerships in addressing the complex security challenges that define the region. By applying neorealism, we can unravel the intricacies of defense dynamics in the North Natuna Sea within the broader geopolitical landscape (Anggraini et al., 2019; Waltz, 1993).

Moreover, neorealism provides a comprehensive understanding of how regional states pursue their national interests and navigate the power struggles that shape their security policies. In the context of the North Natuna Sea, where territorial disputes and resource competition are prominent, analyzing cooperation and alliances through a neorealist perspective offers valuable insights into the motivations and actions of the involved actors. This approach considers the anarchic nature of the international system and emphasizes the role of power distribution and balancing strategies in shaping state behavior. By examining the region through this lens, we can better understand the dynamics of defense cooperation and alliances and their implications for the security and stability of the North Natuna Sea.

Neorealism posits that power distribution in the international system is a central determinant of state behaviour. In the North Natuna Sea, where territorial disputes and resource competition persist, power relations among nations play a crucial role in shaping defense cooperation and alliances (Waltz, 1993). The relative power positions and perceived security threats faced by major regional players, such as Indonesia and neighbouring states, motivate them.

The involvement of external actors outside the immediate area further complicates the power dynamics in the North Natuna Sea. The neorealist perspective allows us to examine how global powers influence defense cooperation in the area. Major geopolitical players, driven by their strategic interests, may engage in alliances or cooperation agreements that impact the security dynamics of the North Natuna Sea (Anggraini et al., 2019).

Major global powers have strategic interests in the North Natuna Sea region due to its rich natural resources, including oil and gas reserves, and its strategic location for trade and maritime routes. These external actors recognize the area's significance and seek to exert influence and maintain a presence in the region, further complicating the power dynamics (Burgess, 2020; Sukadis, 2021). China, in particular, has been subjecting Indonesia to maritime gray zone tactics in the North Natuna Sea, leading to tensions between the two countries (Laksmana, 2022). However, Indonesia's ownership of the Natuna Sea is firmly supported by UNCLOS, which recognizes Indonesia as an archipelagic state, and foreign ships must get permission from Indonesia to take advantage of natural resources and carry out survey activities in the region (Sukadis, 2021).

Analyzing the effectiveness of defense partnerships requires understanding how these alliances align with the security considerations of the involved nations. Neorealism contends states act based on their security interests and relative power positions. In the North Natuna Sea, where the strategic importance extends beyond regional concerns, the efficacy of defense cooperation is intricately tied to how well these alliances address perceived security threats and protect the national interests of the participating nations (Waltz, 1993).

The broader geopolitical landscape significantly influences the success of defense cooperation in the North Natuna Sea. Neorealism enables researchers to scrutinize the impact of global power shifts, changes in alliances, and the evolving international system on the effectiveness of regional defense partnerships. Changes in the distribution of power, the emergence of new security threats, and shifts in the priorities of major players all contribute to the dynamic nature of defense cooperation in the region (Anggraini et al., 2019).

3.3. Adherence to International Maritime Laws and Defense Diplomacy: A Legal Positivist Perspective

The question of to what extent Indonesia adheres to international maritime laws, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in shaping its defense diplomacy strategy requires a nuanced exploration of legal norms and their impact on state behavior. Like the one (Hart & Green, 2012) pushed for, a legal positivist lens is useful for examining how well Indonesia follows international law and how legal rules affect its defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea (Hart & Green, 2012; United Nations, 1982).

Indonesia's adherence to international maritime laws, particularly UNCLOS, is crucial in determining the legitimacy of its defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea. The UNCLOS recognizes Indonesia as an archipelagic state and supports its ownership of the Natuna Sea, which extends into the North Natuna Sea. Foreign ships must get permission from Indonesia to take advantage of natural resources and conduct survey activities in the region. Indonesia's compliance with international law can provide insights into the effectiveness of its defense diplomacy approach and its commitment to maintaining a peaceful and cooperative maritime environment (Iskandar, 2014; Sukadis, 2021). However, China has been subjecting Indonesia to maritime grey zone tactics in the North Natuna Sea, leading to tensions between the two countries [8]. Indonesia is developing its forces, including major weapons purchases for the Navy, to defend its interests in the region (Burgess, 2020).

According to legal positivism, legal institutions, and regulations significantly influence states' behavior. In the case of Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea, applying legal positivism allows researchers to examine the nation's adherence to UNCLOS and other relevant international maritime laws. UNCLOS, as a foundational legal framework governing maritime affairs, establishes rules regarding territorial waters, exclusive economic zones, and the rights and responsibilities of coastal states (United Nations, 1982).

By analyzing Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy through the lens of legal positivism, researchers can assess whether the nation is upholding its obligations under UNCLOS. This is particularly important in the North Natuna Sea, where territorial disputes and conflicting claims have been a source of tension among neighboring countries. By examining Indonesia's adherence to UNCLOS and other relevant international maritime laws, a clearer understanding of the country's approach to maintaining a cooperative maritime environment in the region can be gained. UNCLOS serves as a crucial legal framework that outlines the rights and responsibilities of coastal states, providing guidelines for delimiting territorial waters and exclusive economic zones.

Assessing Indonesia's compliance with UNCLOS involves examining its actions and policies in light of the convention's provisions. Legal positivism states that institutions and rules greatly impact states' actions. This means that researchers can look at how Indonesia follows the rules set by UNCLOS, like recognizing maritime boundaries and using the right dispute-resolution mechanisms (Hart & Green, 2012).

Indonesia's adherence to UNCLOS is not solely a matter of legal obligation but also has implications for its defense diplomacy strategy. Legal norms set by UNCLOS contribute to establishing a rules-based order in the maritime domain. By following UNCLOS provisions, Indonesia can enhance its credibility as a responsible actor in the international community and strengthen its diplomatic standing, especially concerning disputes in the North Natuna Sea (United Nations, 1982).

The impact of legal norms on defense diplomacy is evident in how states navigate disputes and engage in cooperative efforts. Legal positivism helps researchers understand whether Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy aligns with the principles and guidelines set forth in UNCLOS. In a region with territorial disputes and geopolitical tensions, adherence to international maritime laws promotes stability and predictability, which are crucial for successful defense diplomacy (Hart & Green, 2012).

However, legal positivism also acknowledges the role of domestic considerations in shaping state behavior. While international legal standards provide a framework, internal factors like political considerations, economic interests, and public opinion may impact Indonesia's adherence to UNCLOS. A comprehensive legal positivism analysis allows researchers to discern the interplay between international legal obligations and domestic factors in shaping Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea.

3.4. Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, and Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy in the North Natuna Sea: Implications for Perception and Support

Examining the role of cultural diplomacy and soft power in Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea provides a fascinating perspective on how nations navigate complex geopolitical landscapes. Joseph Nye's theory of soft power, emphasizing attraction and persuasion over coercion, proves particularly insightful in understanding how Indonesia utilizes cultural diplomacy to shape perceptions and garner regional international support (Katzenstein, 2018; Nye, 1990).

According to Nye (1990), soft power is the capacity of a country to influence others through allure, culture, and shared values. In the North Natuna Sea context, where territorial disputes and geopolitical tensions persist, the strategic application of soft power becomes a crucial element of Indonesia's defense diplomacy.

Cultural diplomacy, one facet of soft power, involves the promotion of a nation's culture, language, and values to build positive perceptions abroad. With its rich cultural heritage, Indonesia strategically employs cultural diplomacy initiatives in the North Natuna Sea region. By showcasing its diverse traditions, arts, and language, Indonesia seeks to create an attractive image that resonates with international audiences (Katzenstein, 2018).

One notable example is Indonesia's promoting cultural events and exchanges in the North Natuna Sea region. Festivals, art exhibitions, and educational programs serve as avenues for cultural engagement, fostering mutual understanding and creating positive associations with Indonesia. Through these initiatives, Indonesia aims to position itself as a cultural influence, contributing to the soft power narrative in the North Natuna Sea (Katzenstein, 2018).

Soft power also extends to the realm of public diplomacy, where the Indonesian government communicates directly with foreign publics to shape perceptions. Public diplomacy efforts in the North Natuna Sea focus on presenting Indonesia as a responsible and influential actor, emphasizing its commitment to regional stability and adherence to international norms. By cultivating positive narratives, Indonesia aims to build trust and support among the international community (Nye, 1990).

The implications of cultural diplomacy and soft power in Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy are far-reaching. Positive perceptions generated through these efforts contribute to a favorable international image, enhancing Indonesia's diplomatic standing in the North Natuna Sea region. A well-crafted soft power approach can influence public opinion, sway decision-makers, and foster cooperation in addressing shared challenges (Katzenstein, 2018).

International support is critical to effective cultural diplomacy and soft power application. By creating a positive and attractive image, Indonesia will likely garner support for its position in the North Natuna Sea disputes. When harnessed adeptly, soft power can shape regional narratives, garner sympathy, and encourage collaborative solutions to complex issues (Nye, 1990).

However, challenges exist, including the need for sustained efforts, the potential for cultural misunderstandings, and the influence of geopolitical dynamics. Effectiveness in cultural diplomacy and soft power hinges on consistent engagement, genuine representation of cultural values, and adaptability to evolving geopolitical contexts (Katzenstein, 2018).

4. Conclusion

A historical institutionalism perspective provides a nuanced understanding of how Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea has evolved over time. By recognizing the enduring impact of historical legacies, institutional structures, and past decisions, policymakers can draw valuable lessons to navigate the present complexities and shape a more effective and adaptive defense diplomacy strategy for the future.

A neorealist perspective provides a valuable framework for evaluating the current state of defense cooperation and alliances in the North Natuna Sea. By examining power dynamics, security considerations, and the broader geopolitical landscape, researchers can gain insights into the efficacy of these partnerships. Neorealism underscores the importance of acknowledging the influence of relative power positions and security interests in shaping defense dynamics, offering a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in defense cooperation in the North Natuna Sea.

A legal positivist perspective is instrumental in evaluating how Indonesia adheres to international maritime laws, including UNCLOS, in shaping its defense diplomacy strategy. This lens provides insights into the intricate relationship between legal norms and state behaviour, highlighting the significance of compliance with international legal frameworks for effective defence diplomacy in the North Natuna Sea.

Nye's theory of soft power provides a valuable framework for analyzing how Indonesia utilizes cultural diplomacy in its defense diplomacy strategy in the North Natuna Sea. The implications of cultural initiatives and soft power applications extend beyond mere image-building, impacting public perceptions and garnering international support. By strategically leveraging its rich cultural heritage, Indonesia navigates the complex geopolitical terrain to foster positive relationships and achieve diplomatic objectives.

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